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BOOKS ON

ARCHITECTURE, COSTUME FURNITURE, GARDENS and ORNAMENT

MAGGS BROS.

Booksellers by Appointment to His Majesty King George V and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales

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NOTICE

Corrado Ricci's book deals with the turn of the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, which is one of the most fascinating periods in the history of European painting. It was the time when the Gothic tradition was at war with the new liberal spirit of the Renaissance. Classical influences struggled with the mysticism of the Gothic spirit, whole philosophies collapsed and a new world arose from the ruins.

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Leonardo da Vinci stands at the head of the new movement of the Renaissance and his influence dominates the painting of Northern Italy for a whole century. His personality has given rise to important problems, which the author has solved in this publication. Details from Leonardo's best known pictures are reproduced.

The school which followed Leonardo as master exercised a decisive influence in Northern Italy. This influence, the relation between

the members of the group to each other, described in detail by the author, give evidence of Leonardo's greatness and of his fascinating personality. Other influences, emanating from other districts, also played their part, notably those which are associated with the princely houses, especially those of the Sforza family of Milan. Among Leonardo's followers there were also those who copied his technique, coarsening his «sfumato» and distorting the famous enigmatic smile. At the same time works of great importance were created by such men as Andrea Solario, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, Bernardo Luini and Sodoma, whose work is represented in most of the great galleries.

The evolution of this movement leads to Correggio who, at the end of the century, surpassed his contemporaries as Leonardo had surpassed his own at the beginning. Correggio provides the link to the Baroque style. He created problems which had hitherto been alien to the art of painting. He attacked the problem of light and shade which he loved for their own sake, in an altogether new manner.

From the above it will be seen that the present publication deals with a particularly vital section in the history of Italian art. Corrado Ricci's descriptive powers make the reading of his book a valuable stimulus. His book will be indispensable to all libraries, collectors, museums and to those commercially and professionally concerned with the art of this period.

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It is an interesting fact that both Naples and Genoa, the two great Mediterranean ports, were late in shaking themselves free from the conventional form of art which had once been common to all Italy. The great masters of Florence, Venice and Rome had solved most of the problems which beset their path long before the Neapolitans realised that painting meant something more than the mere repetition of stereotyped figures set in uncomfortable attitudes.

It is perhaps for this reason that the study of Southern Italian art has hitherto been somewhat neglected. It is true that Naples produced no pioneer in the sense that Giotto was a pioneer; but, on the other hand, the history of Neapolitan painting forms, as it were, an important and significant epilogue to the history of painting in other parts of Italy. Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Correggio, had already produced their great masterpieces: Giorgio Vasari, the historian, had said that nothing more remained to be done in art.

But from the point of view of the painters of Southern Italy there was much more to be done. The forms of art which had been perfected in the north had to be modified to suit the livelier temperament and warmer climate of the south. They had to be transformed into a vehicle for expressing the joyous things of this world as well as the spiritual things of the world to come. They had to be moulded

to portray with startling, almost theatrical realism the livid hues of death and all the gruesome details of a martyrdom or an assassination. The art of Naples and the surrounding districts was thus in a sense a digest of the art of other regions seen through southern eyes; enlivened on the one hand, by sheer sensuous enjoyment and on the other, sternly repressed by the leaders of the Counter-Reformation; a phase of Italian art growing on Italian soil that was yet under the influence of Arragon and Spain.

Signor Aldo de Rinaldis, who has undertaken the task of writing the history of this most interesting phase of Italian art, is a scholar of repute, and holds an important position in the State Department responsible for the preservation of works of art in southern Italy. He is thus in a position to speak with the voice of authority and has already published a series of monographs on most of the principle artists who flourished in Naples. In the present volume he deals with the many and diverse factors which, each in its own way, played a part in shaping the Neapolitan school, and traces the development of art during the half-century that witnessed the triumphs of Battistello Caracciolo, Massimo Stanzione, Bernardo Cavallino, Luca Giordano, Salvator Rosa, and many another artist whose works are numbered among the treasures of our great collections. The history of Italian painting is not complete without a history of its Neapolitan epilogue.

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Quand Corot a abordé la gravure, il avait derrière lui trente années de dessins exécutés avec une conscience et une précision incroyables. Son

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Il en fit la preuve d'emblée quand il pratiqua, le premier, la technique si curieuse et trop oubliée des « clichés-verre ». Le procédé, à peine modifié par la suite, consistait à graver à la pointe une couche opaque de collodion étalée sur une plaque de verre. On produisait ainsi par le dessin un véritable « négatif » dont il pouvait être tiré des épreuves sur papier sensible, exactement comme dans le cas d'un cliché photographique. La couleur choisie pour le support et puis certains virages, amoureusement étudiés et recherchés, ajoutaient aux résultats de gravure la plus étonnante saveur de rendu.

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Comme elle l'avait fait en de semblables occasions, la Réunion des Bibliothèques Nationales a décidé de perpétuer le souvenir de l'admirable Exposition de 1931 en publiant un album de vingt planches choisies parmi les eaux-fortes les plus frémissantes de l'artiste, les plus harmonieuses de ses lithographies, les plus précieux de ses « clichés-verre ».

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